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ON THE

INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS

AND

COMMERCE OF THE WEST,

BY

HON. DAVID HENSHAW.

Boston:

BUTTON AND WENTWORTH, PRINTERS,

Nos. 10 and 12 Exchange Street.

1839.





L E T T E R S

ON THE

INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS

AND

COMMERCE OF THE WEST,

BY

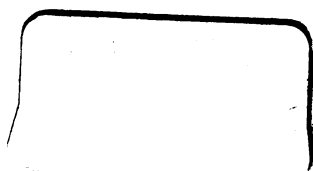
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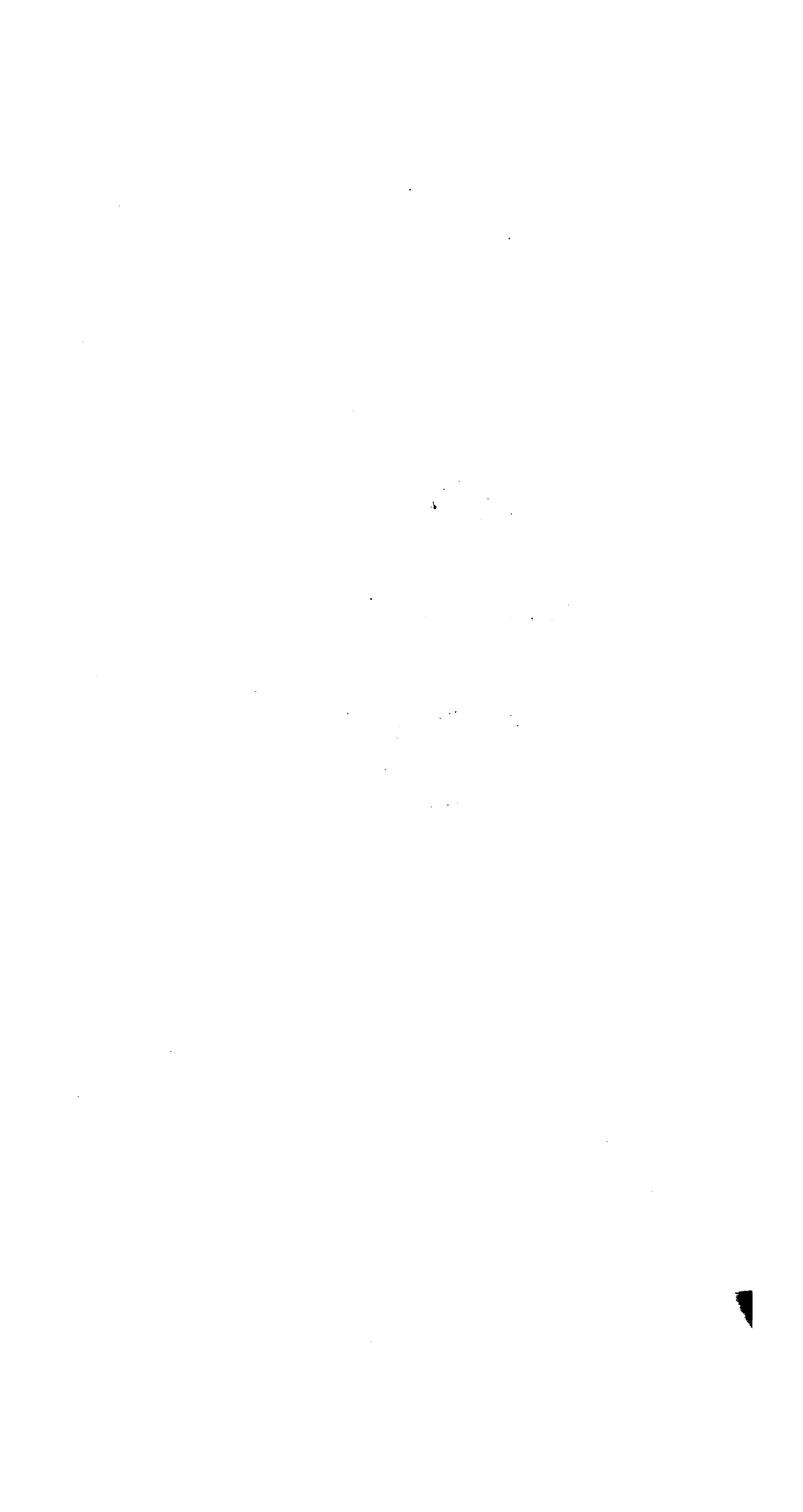
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THE following highly interesting Letters were communicated to **CHARLES G. GREENE, Esq.**, Editor of the Morning Post, by **HON. DAVID HENSHAW**, while travelling in the West; and were recently published in that paper. They are now printed in a pamphlet form, for the information of those who feel an interest in the Great Western Rail-road.





We came to Frederick, in Maryland, on the Baltimore and Ohio Rail-road—distance by this way sixty-one miles from Baltimore, and by the old road forty-eight. Parr's Ridge, some sixteen miles from Frederick, is surmounted by inclined plains, by horse power; the highest inclination, or grade, of these plains, is about 370 feet per mile. The rail-road company are, however, now constructing a new road, of about six miles, around this ridge, which is to be finished in a few weeks. They find a route, the highest inclination being eighty-three feet to the mile, that enables them to surmount the elevation with locomotive engines. They are also in two other places cutting off curves by new pieces of road. They are likewise laying, in place of the old plate rail, new edge rails of the T pattern, weighing 55 lbs. to the yard. They intend to put the line from the present terminus of the road to Cumberland, under contract next year. It would be a great relief to travellers, crossing this formidable chain of mountains, to be able to do it by rail-road. The national road from Cumberland to this place, is a good road of the kind, but it is not in all cases well located, and no common road can ever come in competition, for convenience, comfort and speed, with rail-roads.

Maryland appreciates her position, and is wisely expending large sums for internal improvements, to avail herself of her natural advantages.

The country around Frederick is very good, the farmers appear in a thriving condition, and large quantities of land are in cultivation for wheat. The wheat appears green and luxuriant, and if not winter-killed, the crop in that quarter will be great the next year.

Cumberland is a thriving town, of some three thousand people, surrounded by lofty mountains. The mountain scenery in the vicinity is on a magnificent scale, and of the wildest and most romantic character. I regretted that I could make no stay here. Cumberland is about 150 miles from Baltimore, and near to the lines of Pennsylvania and Virginia. It is on a small stream that empties into the Potomac. The place suffered a few years since heavily from fire, and in fact has not yet fully recovered from that calamity. It is situate in the coal region, and must be greatly benefited by the extension of the Baltimore and Ohio Rail-road and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, which will both reach her neighborhood within a few years.

A few miles this side of Cumberland we passed over the famed battle ground of Braddock's defeat, in the old French war of 1755. It was here that General Washington first shew that military sagacity and tact, which in after times so much exalted his fame, and that, on the occasion of this disaster, saved the remainder of Braddock's army. There is a monument a short distance from the road, on

an eminence, that marks the place where Braddock fell.

Ten miles this side of Cumberland we reach Frostburg, a region famous for its bituminous coal. A Boston company own inexhaustible mines here, of coal of the finest quality, and when the rail-road and canal shall have been brought to the vicinity, these mines must yield a never-failing profit. Coal, equal to the best Orrel coal in your market, is delivered at the houses in Frostburg at four cents per bushel.

At some two hundred and twenty miles from Baltimore, in the midst of the mountains on the western side of the Alleghany range, we reached Brownsville. It is on the Alleghany river, and built upon the site of the old frontier fort, Redstone. It is a village of about three thousand people—noted in this section for its iron works and ship building. A new steamboat, of 300 tons, built at this place, left a few hours before we arrived, for Pittsburg, by the river 55 miles distant—she was then to descend the Ohio for Louisville. The Alleghany is navigable for steamers sixty miles above Brownsville.

I noticed a beautiful iron bridge, of a single arch, some thirty feet high, supported by stone abutments, over a stream that empties into the Alleghany, at Brownsville, made by the iron mas-

ters and artists of Brownsville. The work would be considered a wonder in any part of the country.

We took our supper at Washington, Pa., a good town of two thousand people. It is in the midst of an excellent farming country—wheat commands very readily \$1,12½ per bushel, which is called there a high price. Though my ride over the mountains has been a tiresome one, I have been much pleased with it, and it has given me the desire to try the route again more leisurely at a more favorable season of the year.

Wheeling, on the Virginia bank of the Ohio, has grown much of late years, and now counts a population of nearly or quite, ten thousand. It is surrounded by a good farming country. Its population is a busy and thriving community. There are four iron factories, two steam flouring mills, and some ship building, carried on here. The handicraft trades employ, advantageously, many of its citizens. It is a thriving, but not a handsome, place.

LETTER II.

LOUISVILLE, Nov. 29, 1838.

I descended the Ohio, from Wheeling, on the 20th, in the steamer Brownsville, owned and built at Brownsville, formerly Redstone. The boat was crowded with passengers, and almost sinking with freight; wet, dirty, and uncomfortable. It was the best of the two that were in port. The weather was inclement, and the season quite unpropitious for enjoyment. The Ohio is a beautiful river, not averaging, I think, more than eighty rods wide above Cincinnati. The shores are generally settled, and every four miles, on either side, a village is seen, decorating the river's banks; many of them handsome, and most of them flourishing. Some of the more important points we passed in the night, including Marietta, Guyandotte, and Portsmouth. Maysville, on the Kentucky shore, some sixty or seventy miles above Cincinnati, numbers about 3,000 people, is surrounded by a fertile, farming country, and is a place of business and note. While our boat was discharging freight, and landing her passengers for this place, I had time to walk up in town, and to examine, as the greatest lion in the place,

a "Pork House"; in other words, a slaughter-house for hogs. There are two in this place, at which are killed and dressed about twenty thousand hogs during the pork season. Sixty men were employed in the one I visited, and the whole operation of killing, (knocking the hogs in the head,) scalding, cleaning, dressing, cutting up, assorting, packing, trying and straining the lard, pressing the scraps, cleaning the sausage skins, was going on actively, under the eye of a fat jolly superintendent. There were about 250 pigs strung up to drain and cool, that had been killed and dressed that morning. The pork is small, the pigs not averaging, I think, 200 lbs. and costs $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 cents per lb. The salt is procured from the Virginia Springs, on this side the mountains, which, since they have commenced making it by solar evaporation, is very good.

The shores of the Ohio give ample proof of the wonderful industry of its inhabitants. It is but about sixty years since the first attempts were made to settle its banks,—it now smiles with farms, habitations, villages, and cities. There is a marked difference, however, in the improvement of the two shores. In passing from the United States to Canada, one would suppose that he had entered a new region, differing widely in soil and climate from the one he had left a few rods behind him; something of the like kind, though not to the same extent, is observed on the two shores of

the Ohio. In both cases, the scenes bear testimony to the value of *free* institutions in elevating and improving the moral and physical condition of man.

Cincinnati is a beautiful city, truly "the Queen of the West." It has now nearly 45,000 people. It is laid out in regular squares—ascending somewhat abruptly from the river. There is much wealth, great activity, and an extensive business, there. Many of the private dwellings rival in elegance and cost your Beacon street, Summer street, and Tremont street residences—and are furnished as sumptuously as the best houses in the Atlantic cities. In fact, I think the general style of furnishing is more costly than with you.

They are displaying a good deal of taste, and incurring great expense, on some of their public edifices. The country around Cincinnati is rich, and in high cultivation. A canal is made to Dayton and Piqua, some 80 miles, and is to unite at Defiance with the Wabash and Erie Canal and will thus open a communication with Lake Erie by the Maumee Valley. This artificial tributary pours the vast amount of produce from the bordering country into Cincinnati. It is also in contemplation to run a rail-road from Cincinnati to Lake Erie—when this is completed, they can reach the lake in about twelve hours, Buffalo by steam in thirty hours from the lake-end of the road, and, when your great Western Rail-road is done to Albany,

they will go from Buffalo to Boston in thirty hours, at the rate of twenty miles per hour, making seventy-two hours from Cincinnati to Boston. The time is not far distant, if Massachusetts does her duty to herself, when she will come in for a large share of the trade of these vast regions, by the way of the lakes.

A road is commenced from Madison, Indiana, about fifty miles above this place, to Indianapolis, ninety miles distant. Twenty miles and upwards are already completed, and the residue is to be done next year. The road was formally opened on Monday last. The Benj. Franklin, steamer, that I came in from Cincinnati, took on board a goodly number of young people of both sexes at Neveay, and left them at Madison to join in the celebration, and the ball that was to follow in the evening. They were anticipating great doings and much pleasure. Indiana will, it is said, soon have a road from Indianapolis to the lake. Madison is a thriving village of nearly 3000 inhabitants; many of them Yankees, possessing intelligence, enterprise, and industry. It will become a large place. New England habits, spirit and industry, are visible in many of the towns along the Ohio river. In fact, where the Yankees settle in any numbers in the west, the place is sure to thrive.

The weather is pleasant, but dry and cold. Ice is making in the river to-day, but none to impede navigation.

The low stage of the Ohio for months past, put an effectual embargo on all business. Merchandise, manufactures, produce, all remained on the hands of their owners. A good deal of pecuniary embarrassment has been the consequence ; business, however, is very brisk.

LETTER III.

LOUISVILLE, DEC. 3, 1838.

THE city is an important point on the Ohio river, and in fact it maintains a proud eminence in the great Valley of the Mississippi. Important, however, as it is, the people of the East, generally, are ignorant of its history, its resources, and even, in fact, of its location. It is situated on the right, or Kentucky, bank of the Ohio, at the Falls. Thomas Bullitt purchased the site of the Indians, and "located" the town in 1773, but died before effecting any settlement. Geo. R. Clarke erected a rude stockade first here in the fall and winter of 1778 and 1779. Clarke's known courage, energy and prudence inspired confidence in his success, and drew settlers to his encampment. The place, however, besides being a frontier post, liable to the inroads of the savage, was proved to be sickly, so that, as late as the year 1800, Louisville numbered but 800 people. About fifteen years ago, the low grounds in the rear of the city were drained, and the place has since become remarkably healthy. It is now supposed to contain nearly 30,000 people, including about four thousand blacks. In 1830 it had but 10,000 people.

The city is laid out in squares—the streets are wide and handsome, running parallel with the river one way, having cross streets at right angles with these.

The most important public work here is the Louisville and Portland Canal. There is a fall of twenty-six feet in about two miles distance on the river, from the upper part to the lower part of Louisville, called Portland. The Canal Company was incorporated in 1825, and the Canal opened for use December, 1830. There are one guard and three lift locks ; the guard lock is 190 feet long in the clear, with semi-circular heads of twenty-six feet diameter, fifty feet wide and forty-two high. The lift locks are of the same width of the guard lock, twenty feet high and 183 long. There is a beautiful stone bridge thrown over the canal about mid-way, with one main and two small arches—the first is sixty feet span and sixty-eight feet high—the side arches are forty feet span. There are besides three culverts. The walls of the canal are 921 feet long, and the whole work has required nearly 42,000 perches of masonry. The whole cost \$750,000. Tolls, sixty cents per ton for steamboats, and three cents per foot for keel and flat boats. The canal is very profitable, giving the stockholders, I am informed, about nine per cent, semi-annually, and leaving a surplus for future improvements. The stockholders are not allowed by their charter to receive more than eighteen per cent. yearly.

There are turnpikes from this city to Frankfort, Bardstown, and Elizabethtown. They talk of a rail-road from this to Nashville—one from Jeffersonville, on the opposite side, to the interior of Indiana, and another to Alton, all of which, as the country advances in wealth, will no doubt be completed.

There are several handsome public buildings, but generally the edifices are not costly or handsome. The county is now building a very large and costly Court house, at an expense of nearly half a million of dollars, it is said, in the hope of getting the seat of government fixed here.

Fulton made his first unsuccessful attempts to navigate the western waters by steam in December, 1812, in a boat, the Orleans, of 400 tons, built at Pittsburg. He reached New Orleans, but had to leave his boat there, being unable to ascend the river with her. There are now on these waters 375 steamers, varying in size from 50 tons up to 600 tons burden.

There is a good share of banking capital in this city. The bank of Kentucky has a capital of five millions—the Northern Bank three millions—the Bank of Louisville two millions. There are besides the Louisville Savings Institution, and the Mechanics' Saving Bank. There are five Insurance Companies, viz : the Firemen's Insurance

Company, the Franklin Insurance Company, the Louisville Marine and Fire Insurance Company, the Merchants' Louisville Insurance Company, and the Portland Dry Dock and Insurance Company—each with a capital of \$100,000. There are also agencies for the Spring Garden Insurance Company, of Philadelphia, the American Life and Trust Company, Lexington Fire, Life and Marine Insurance Company, the Baltimore Life Insurance and Trust Company, and the Ætna Insurance Company, of Hartford.

The number and the capital of these institutions will serve to give you some idea of the importance of Louisville in a commercial point of view. It is stated that, in the year 1837, a year unfavorable to trade, there were 3200 tons of iron used and sold in Louisville—39 millions feet of lumber, 20 millions of shingles, ten thousand cords of wood, seven hundred thousand bushels of coal, two hundred thousand bushels of salt, twenty-five hundred hogsheads of tobacco, &c. There are large quantities of hemp raised in this vicinity; clean hemp is worth about \$100 per ton—large quantities of bale rope and bagging are made in the neighborhood. Good, judicious cultivators, it is said, can clear one hundred dollars an acre per annum, in raising hemp at the present price, or in raising tobacco at 12 cents per lb. The “pork houses” pack about 35,000 hogs a season. Louisville, you will remember, is but a single small point in the vast valley of the Mississippi.

New England, and yet more, Massachusetts might reap rich harvests from these fertile fields, if they would seek a knowledge of them, and cultivate a trade with the people who inhabit them—yet how little do our people know of them! You can communicate with them by way of the lakes, and a rail-road from Buffalo, Albany, and Boston, saving the dangerous travel over the mountains, quicker and better than Philadelphia or Baltimore, and as quick as New York. If the people of Massachusetts consult their own permanent interests, they will hasten to complete their road to Albany, and will lend all reasonable aid to open a road from the Ohio river to the lake.

There are fifteen white, and one African, churches in the city, of various denominations, and several religious and charitable societies, all evincing the prevalence of an elevated moral and religious feeling in the community. The institutions of public worship stand permanent among the beneficial arrangements of a civilized society. I think little of creeds or rituals, and far too many of the preachers of our day, and our land, are men of humble intellects, and bigoted feelings. But the benefits of public worship are not so much in the preaching, as in the association of men at the altar. Congregate men of all ages in a church at stated periods—assemble both sexes, dressed in clean habiliments, on a level, at the altar of God, and though there were not a word spoken—as is the

case at a Quaker meeting—nay, even if error be preached to them, they will still improve in their kindly and social feelings ; they will rub off, as it were by attrition, the rough points of character that are sure to show themselves in those living rural or secluded lives. Error, if preached, will soon lose its influence, and be forgotten ; while the good will remain, and promote the lasting improvement of society. We, of the east, think lightly of western morals ; were we better informed, we should perceive, that with some difference the habits and usages, between the two sections, there is really little difference in the high tone of moral feeling which pervades the community on either side to the Alleghanic ridge.

The collegiate institute of Louisville, recently established, is designed to educate young men in the higher branches of learning, and with reference to our political, moral, and social systems. Our older colleges in the east would much improve if they were to *Americanize* themselves a little. There are seven free schools in this city, and many private instructors, among the most distinguished and successful of the latter, in this city, and in fact, I may say the State, is Francis E. Goddard, Esq. formerly of your city.

The Louisville Medical Institute was chartered in 1833, and went into operation last year, with a class of eighty pupils. They have a fine new

building nearly completed, said to be one of the best planned buildings, for the purpose, in the country. Dr. J. B. Flint, late of your city, a gentleman of the most estimable character, an high order of talents, and distinguished professional attainments, is the Professor of Surgery. He visited Europe, last year, to procure instruments and books for the Institute. This medical school bids fair to take the lead in this section of the west.

There are about sixty doctors, and nearly as many lawyers, in Louisville. The professions are crowded.

Having, in this hasty scrawl, about filled my paper, as you will perceive, I have to bid you farewell.

LETTER IV.

PEORIA, DEC. 26, 1838.

MY DEAR SIR—Having a leisure day, while waiting for the stage to take me to Galena, I embrace the opportunity to give you a sketch of the plans of internal improvements adopted by the State of Illinois, and now in progress to completion.

The first project is to unite the waters of Lake Michigan with the Illinois river, by a canal, and by that river with the Mississippi. This work commences on the north fork of the south branch of the Chicago river, at its navigable point, four miles to the south-west of Chicago, and extends seven and a half miles to "The Point of Oaks," on the river Des Plaines, and down the valley of this river to the end of the lake level, twenty-five miles, to a new town called Lockport. Here are two locks, of ten feet lift each, by which a very valuable and inexhaustible water power is obtained, from the waters of the lake. From Lockport, the canal is to run in the same valley, to Juliet, crossing the Des Plaines here, by a dam, thence passes Marseilles and crosses the Fox river,

by an aqueduct, between the main bluff and Ottawa. A navigable feeder connects it with the rapids of Fox river, four miles above Ottawa, and extends through the town to the Illinois river. The canal passes down the right bank of the Illinois, below Ottawa, to a point where the river is navigable for steamboats, at all stages of the water. The whole length of the canal, including the Fox river feeder and the Chicago river, is 105 miles ; and the estimated cost, eight millions six hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The expense is to be defrayed mainly from the sales of each alternate section of land along the line of the canal, and two miles in width, which the United States have given for this purpose. The whole line of the canal is under contract, and a portion of it completed. When done, it is supposed that merchandise can be transported from New York, via the Hudson and Erie canal, and the lakes, and be delivered by this canal, to St. Louis, in sixteen days.

In the second division of improvements, the State has appropriated 100,000 dollars to improve the Great Wabash, in conjunction with Indiana—one hundred thousand to the Illinois river—one hundred thousand to the Rock river—fifty thousand to Kaskaskia river—fifty thousand to the Little Wabash—two hundred and fifty thousand on the mail route from Vincennes to St. Louis—and three millions five hundred thousand dollars for a

rail-road through the centre of the State, from near the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi, to Galena.

A southern cross rail-road, from Alton to Mount Carmel, one from Alton to Shawneetown, and another from Belleville, to intersect the Alton road, to Mount Carmel—for all these the State has appropriated 1,700,000 dollars.

A northern cross rail-road, from Quincy, on the Mississippi, is to go through Jacksonville, Springfield, (which is to be the capital of the State in 1840,) Decatur, Danville, and in the direction of La Fayette, in Indiana, uniting with the great works of internal improvement in that young but thrifty State—1,850,000 dollars are appropriated for this road.

A rail-road from Alton to Hillsboro', Charleston and Paris, to the State line, towards Terra Haute, to unite again with the Indiana improvements—1,250,000 dollars are appropriated for this work.

Seven hundred thousand dollars are appropriated for a rail-road from Peoria to Warsaw, at the foot of the Des Moines rapids, on the Mississippi.

Three hundred and fifty thousand dollars for a rail-road from Bloomington to Mackinaw, and thence in two branches to the Illinois river—one through Tremont to Pekin—the other to Peoria.

Besides these State works, there are several canals and rail-roads undertaken by private companies, one from Naples to Jacksonville, now under contract, and partly built—another from Jacksonville to Augusta, on the Illinois river—another from Chicago, twelve miles, to des Plaines, and designed to be continued to Galena—another from opposite to St. Louis to the coal mines in St. Clair county.

These gigantic works would startle the citizens of the east ; but any judicious person, in examining the nature and extent of this great State, would say that they evince great energy and sagacity. This State is large enough to form eight States of the size of Massachusetts ; the country, generally, is level and remarkably favorable for the construction of rail-roads ; and, during a considerable portion of the year, the common roads are almost impassable. The produce of the soil will be nearly doubled in value, for large districts of country, by these works, while every article of necessity or luxury procured from abroad will come at a diminished cost. The benefits accruing to the citizens, and of course to the State, from these two sources alone, will be more than sufficient to pay for the outlay, if there were not a farthing of direct income derived from the investment.

It will be but a few years before one or more rail-roads will be extended from the eastern termini of these, through Indiana and Ohio to Lake Erie.—When this shall have been done, the people living on the Mississippi, in Missouri, and along this State, will be able to reach New York and Boston, if the Great Western road is built to Albany, in five days, and avoid the tedious and dangerous route over the Alleghany range. If you will cast your eye over the map of the United States, you will find that the most direct route from this quarter to Boston and New York, is by the way of Lake Erie. Massachusetts should not hesitate, and she will not, if she consult her own interest, to complete her road to Albany, at whatever cost it may require. With a little enterprise, she may secure the direct custom of these vast regions; regions soon to be as well peopled as they are vast—abounding in mineral resources, and blessed with a soil of unrivalled fertility.

The government and the citizens of Massachusetts have not studied their true interests. They have sought their customers—the consumers of their foreign and domestic goods—through circuitous channels; they have helped to build up New York, and Philadelphia, and Baltimore and New Orleans, by commissions, that they might have retained at home. Massachusetts has the largest share of the trade to India and China, to the Baltic and the Levant, she has a fishery worth ten

millions of dollars a year—a manufacturing industry worth sixty or seventy millions annually, and yet she has little or no direct communication with those who consume the surplus produce of her commerce and her labor. Her banks are greatly in fault on this point; they, in a measure, compel the manufacturer and merchant to send his goods to a distant city, by refusing to discount accommodation paper on a pledge of goods, but discounting drafts, because they can get a higher rate of interest under the term *exchange*. This policy ought to be changed, either by the voluntary action of the banks, or by legislative interposition, authorizing a higher rate of interest on home notes, than on bills of exchange.

If Massachusetts will but be true to her own interests, and take suitable measures to secure the direct trade of those who now consume the products of her industry, she may have a city that shall rival in size and opulence, the proudest in the Union.

With very great respect,

I am, dear Sir, your ob't serv't.

DAVID HENSHAW.

C. G. GREENE, Esq.

FROM THE BOSTON MORNING POST.

Creation of Wealth by the completion of the Erie Canal.

Official valuation of the real and personal property of the State of New York, as per Ruggles's Report, to the Legislature of that State, dated March 12, 1838 :

1815.

Real Estate,	\$239,667,218	
Personal property,	41,587,905	
	<hr/>	\$281,255,123

1825.

Real Estate,	199,533,471	
Personal property,	63,893,875	
	<hr/>	263,427,346

1835.

Real Estate,	403,517,585	
Personal property,	125,058,794	
	<hr/>	\$528,576,379

Thus showing that the whole amount of the whole real and personal property in the State of New York was doubled, in the ten years, which followed 1825.

Eighteen hundred and twenty-five is the memorable year of the completion of the Erie Canal, which has already paid for itself and now gives \$1,100,000 a year nett revenue to the State Treasury.

But that canal, great as have been its results, is found inadequate to accommodate its immense business; and New York State has determined to enlarge it sevenfold, at an expense of \$15,000,000. She has resolved to do this in the shortest possible time, viz: within five years—and it is calculated that the revenue of the enlarged canal will pay for its cost (principal and interest) before 1865.

Meanwhile, there is no State Tax, in the State of New York; because the revenues of the canals furnish all that is wanted, besides paying the cost of the canals, (principal and interest.)

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